



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Department of Labor Standards

Executive Order #511 **Emergency Action Planning** Summary of Standards and Recommendations

This summary of standards was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards ("DLS") for informational purposes and does not constitute an official interpretation by OSHA or any other agencies/entities listed as a source of standards or guidance in this document, nor an exhaustive recitation of the requirements therein. Rather, the summary is provided for the health and safety committees to assess current health and safety management of this hazard against the nationally-recognized standard. As the information provided in this document is only a summary, please consult the full standard(s) as well as any other needed sources of technical assistance for developing or improving your emergency action planning program.

It is important to note that state workers are not covered by OSHA standards; the information generated by the health and safety committees will serve to guide the Massachusetts Employee Safety and Health Advisory Committee in identifying effective and practical strategies and policies for improving the health and safety of state workers.

Primary Technical Standard or Guideline:

OSHA 29 CFR 1910.38, Emergency Action Plans (contained as part of 1910 Subpart E, Exit Routes, Emergency Action Plans, and Fire Prevention Plans)*

The goal of this standard is for employers to conduct advance planning for potential emergency events, so that there is the best possible outcome when they occur. During the heat of the moment in an actual emergency, with no advance planning, it is very difficult to figure out what should be done, find phone numbers for sources of help, know how to get out of a building, account for evacuated employees, etc.

Note: There is some overlap between requirements for Emergency Action Planning and Life Safety. Emergency Action planning is intended to look at the full range of potential workplace emergencies, while Life Safety focuses on building fires. Exit routes and Fire Prevention Plans are covered in the Life Safety "answers" document. A Fire Prevention Plan may be included as part of your overall Emergency Action Plan. Therefore, it may be useful to conduct your gap analysis for emergency action planning and life safety at the same time.

** This is the primary national or state standard/guideline for this hazard. Your agency may be following an internal standard of practice or a standard from another source for this hazard. For the gap analysis, if you are following a standard other than the primary worker protection standard listed above, please indicate which standard, if any, is being followed by your agency. If this is an internal standard of practice, please report the basis upon which the determination was made to adopt the standard.*

Related Standards:

OSHA 29 CFR 1910.165, Employee Alarm Systems

Basically, this standard indicates that employee alarm systems must be recognizable as an emergency indicator, readily heard or seen above background levels, and maintained so that they are always in working order. Employees must be trained in what to do when they hear or see the alarm.

OSHA 29 CFR 1910.151, Medical Services and First Aid

For medical emergencies, in the absence of an infirmary, clinic or hospital in near proximity to the workplace, a person or persons shall be adequately trained to render first aid.

Policy:

It is recommended that the agency have a general policy to follow the OSHA standards relative to emergency action planning. What is most important is meeting the practical goal of emergency planning: to ensure that employees know what to do so that quick, effective action can be taken to minimize bad outcomes in emergencies.

For a flu pandemic, it is recommended that the agency have a policy to follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for the specific flu outbreak that is occurring, or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) if they have released guidelines in addition to or different from the CDC guidelines.

Written Plans:

Emergency Action Plan

A written emergency action plan is required for employers with more than 10 employees. For employers with 10 or fewer employees, the plan can be communicated orally to employees.

Emergency Action Planning

Summary of Standards and Recommendations

The OSHA emergency action plan standard recommends that an emergency action plan be developed for “emergencies that the employer may reasonably expect in the workplace. Examples are: fire, toxic chemical releases, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and others.” Unfortunately, at this time in history, terrorist events such as bomb threats or release of biological agents are also a risk, and should be included. Planning for medical emergencies is covered in a different OSHA standard, but should also be included as part of your overall plan.

The key is to think practically about what it will be like during these different emergencies, and what are the most important needed actions from the big picture perspective. During an emergency you may need to:

- Get outside help.
- Let employees know they are in danger.
- Get all employees to safety.
- Take mitigating action (provide first aid, shut down the HVAC system, use a fire extinguisher, etc.).

Think about how you will do this under the intense and overwhelming conditions that can occur during an emergency: the building is on fire, the power is out, there are loud alarms going off, people are crowding exits in panic, there is heavy smoke, someone is on the floor in severe medical distress, there could be a bomb in the building, there is a frightening chemical odor in the air, etc.

In more detail, there are common elements of advance emergency planning for the full range of concerns. These include:

- How to identify that an emergency is occurring, and at what stage or level action is needed.
- Identification of key sources of outside help for each type of emergency (fire, police, medical aid, hazardous materials contractor, etc.).
 - Having emergency contact numbers readily available and assigning responsibility for calling out for help. This is especially important if your workplace is not served by 911.
 - Knowing what type or level of event triggers calling for this help. (For example, for what quantity of spilled chemicals would you call in the fire department or a haz mat team?) It is recommended that you err on the side of caution here, it is better to call for help too early than too late.
- A means of communicating to employees that an emergency is occurring, and they should proceed with what they were instructed to do for this type of emergency.
- Advance instruction to all employees on what they are expected to do during each type of emergency (e.g., evacuate when you hear this alarm).

Emergency Action Planning

Summary of Standards and Recommendations

- Identification of specific employees who are to take any special actions, and what instructions they need to receive (e.g., sweep a certain area to ensure everyone has left the building, use a fire extinguisher, shut down the HVAC intakes, etc.).
- Identifying outside sources of critical instructions or information, for example the Massachusetts Department of Public Health or Homeland Security.

Again, think about these steps in practical terms.

Per the OSHA standard, minimum elements of an emergency action plan are as follows:

- Procedures for reporting a fire or other emergency.
- Procedures for emergency evacuation, including exit route assignments.
- Procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical plant operations before they evacuate (if applicable).
- Procedures to account for all employees after evacuation.
- Procedures to be followed by employees performing rescue or medical duties.
- The name or job title of every employee who may be contacted by employees who need more information about the plan or an explanation of their duties under the plan.

Additional recommendations include:

- If you have mobility-impaired staff or customers/clients/patients at your location, planning for how to evacuate them from the building should be included in your emergency planning efforts. It is recommended that you coordinate with your local fire department on this issue as part of emergency planning efforts. Fire personnel may opt to transport mobility-impaired persons down the elevator in lieu of using the stairwell. Note, however, that no one should use the elevator during a fire situation unless instructed to do so and escorted by fire personnel. There are also special wheelchairs that are designed to be more easily carried down stairwells, commonly known as “stair chairs,” and the fire department can provide guidance on whether these should be available at your location. There are also assist devices such as “med sleds,” which are plastic transport sleds that can be used to get non-ambulatory patients down stairwells, designed so that even a small person should be able to readily transport the patient in the device.
- Develop procedures for shut down of HVAC fresh air intakes. In the event of an outdoor biological or chemical release, you may be instructed by emergency officials to “protect in place,” that is, have employees remain inside the building instead of evacuating them outside into the contaminated air. In that scenario, you will need to minimize the infiltration of outside air into the building, and in a mechanically ventilated building, shut down of fresh air intakes (which draw in outside air) is critical to that goal. The NIOSH publication 2002-139, “Protecting Building Environments from Airborne Chemical, Biological, or Radiological

Attacks” gives detailed technical assistance on this issue. The link to this document: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2002-139/>

Flu Pandemic Plans

The OSHA emergency action planning standard does not specifically address flu pandemic, and it does not pose the immediate, urgent threat that a fire, hurricane, or medical emergency constitutes. Since, however, this has been considered a looming and significant threat in recent years, it was included for evaluation under the emergency action planning hazard assessment.

Since the means of flu transmission varies for different strains (airborne transmission/can be caught from someone sneezing, hand-to-hand contact, hand-to-surface contact, etc.), specific protective measures can also vary. There are, however, key decision-points and plans that should be evaluated and to the extent possible decided and prepared in advance so you can best respond in the event of a flu pandemic or pandemic threat. CDC and MA DPH will issue specific guidance during a flu pandemic. For advance planning, OSHA and NIOSH have guidance documents that can be helpful to this process.

Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic, OSHA Publication 3327-02N (2007):

http://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza_pandemic.html

Elements of flu pandemic planning should include:

- How will preventive/protective measures be identified? The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Mass Department of Public Health (MA DPH) should serve as the primary sources of information.
- At what point should preventive/protective measures be implemented at your workplace? It is recommended that this is based on CDC or DPH guidance.
- How will preventive/protective measures be communicated to employees and enforced?
- At what point will some or all employees be instructed to stay home? It is recommended that this is based on CDC or MA DPH guidance. Also plan for:
 - How these employees will be notified.
 - Identify procedures and means needed to support work-at-home or other measures to continue the work/mission of the agency to the greatest extent practicable.
- If there is contact with the public or outside clients/customers as part of the agency’s work.
 - At what point should services be limited or discontinued?

Emergency Action Planning

Summary of Standards and Recommendations

- Can services be conducted electronically, via telephone, or in another manner that eliminates face-to-face contact.
- If services must be face-to-face, what protective measures can be used to limit flu transmission? This will vary with flu transmission means, but might include items such as plexiglass shields at customer windows or use of gloves or masks.
- For the bullets above, CDC or MA DPH guidance should serve as the primary source of recommended action.

Note: the recommendations above do not apply to health care facilities, for which handling infectious patients is integral to their function. Planning and required actions for a flu pandemic will be far more comprehensive. The OSHA document below can provide guidance on this issue:

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for HealthCare Workers and Healthcare Employers, OSHA publication 3328-05 (2007):

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/3328-05-2007-English.html>

Administrative Controls:

Drills

It is recommended to test out emergency action plans, including evacuation procedures with periodic drills or exercises.

Flu Pandemic

Encouraging employees to receive flu shots may be beneficial. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu shot every year.

Emergency provisions for modifying policies relative to use of sick leave, or expanding leave options are recommended to encourage employees sick with the flu to stay home.

Training and Certification/Licensing Requirements:

Employees must be trained so that they have a clear understanding of their required actions during an emergency as outlined in the emergency action plan. At a minimum, this will include when to evacuate, what exit route to use, and the designated meeting place. This training must include information on what employees are expected to do when the emergency alarm system is activated.

For any employees who are assigned special duties (any action beyond evacuation), they must be trained in how to conduct this duty.

First aid training is only required if outside medical aid is not available within a short timeframe. It is not anticipated that this will be the case anywhere in Massachusetts. If, however, you have an unusually remote or hard to reach workplace, training in first aid and CPR training is required.

There is no requirement to have defibrillators (automated external defibrillators or AEDs) at a work location. If, however, defibrillators are in place, at least some employees should be trained in their use, and they should not be used by anyone who has not been trained.

Engineering Controls – Requirements:

General requirements for employee alarm systems are:

- This system must function to provide warning to employees to take necessary emergency action, such as evacuation.
- The sound or alarm must be able to be seen or heard above background noise and light levels. Tactile devices may be used to alert employees who cannot perceive sound or light from the alarm.
- The alarm must be distinctive and recognizable as an emergency signal.
- Alarm systems must be maintained by trained personnel so that they are operational at all times.
- Alarm systems must be tested every two months.

Web link to full standard or guideline:

Informational resources identified below can also be found on our website at www.mass.gov/dols/eo511.

OSHA Standards:

www.osha.gov, select the “Regulations” tab from the top menu bar. For 1910 standards select the “General Industry” tab. For 1926 standards, select the “Construction” tab. Then, scroll down to find the standard by number.

OSHA 29 CFR 1910.38, Emergency Action Plans

All OSHA documents relative to flu pandemic:

<http://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/pandemicflu/index.html>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health website: www.mass.gov/dph, MA DPH flu pandemic webpage:

http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eohhs2terminal&L=6&L0=Home&L1=Provider&L2=Guidelines+and+Resources&L3=Guidelines+for+Services+%26+Planning&L4=Diseases+and+Conditions&L5=Influenza&sid=Eeohhs2&b=terminalcontent&f=dph_cdc_p_flu_pandemic&csid=Eeohhs2

The NIOSH publication 2002-139, “Protecting Building Environments from Airborne Chemical, Biological, or Radiological Attacks”:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2002-139/>

OSHA Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool at www.osha.gov, specific link below:

http://osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/portable_required.html